

The t in lgbt



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The T in LGBT On the 22nd day of November the past year, the gender community celebrated the 14th International Transgender Day of Remembrance. Featuring 50 Tran's icons which include Isis King, the only transgender contestant ever to grace in America's Next Top Model and Chaz Bono, an iconic transgender and with the overwhelming support from the LGBT community, many find it empowering to use their freedom of expression and no longer be afraid of becoming who they really are. 1 It is almost a typical scene seeing gender-bending individuals roam our society. In public, we see males with big statures yet with long hair and heels. You might also find someone hot as Justin Bieber then discover that it's a she. Passionate couples of the same sex also became more visible. With these, it is safe to say that as of now, society has reached that level of acceptance of these people. It is no longer new or shocking seeing them freely. What hasn't changed is the stereotype that is attached to these people. Whenever a male is feminine, the term gay or homosexual is then labelled to him. Whenever a girl acts manly, then she is called a tomboy or lesbian. But is that always the case? It is a big no. It's way more than that. The real thing is, beneath who they are is something deeper that neither the term gay nor lesbian could define. So what does that make of Isis King and Chaz Bono? What is the T in LGBT? Transgender. Transgender may easily be mixed up with gays or transsexuals or transvestites but learning to differentiate one from the other will give us a clearer understanding of them. What better way to kick things off than starting to set the line between sex and gender. Sex is assigned at birth. It refers to our biological status as either male or female. The Philippine president is male while Lady Gaga is female. How are we certain of that? Well obviously, it is because sex is primarily associated with our

physical attributes. Hormone prevalence, chromosomes, external and internal anatomy and everything obvious could be our basis. Gender on the other hand is more than what we have between our legs. It is how we identify ourselves. It refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for boys and men or girls and women. Simply put, sex is polarity of anatomy while gender is polarity of appearance and behaviour. You might as well be certain as of now that it is necessary to choose using gender as your criteria in categorizing transgenders. After all, the word transgender have gender in it. But that doesn't end there. To fully appreciate the essence of a transgender, one has to separate sexual orientation from gender identity. Sexual orientation is which sex you find erotically attractive to. If you're male and attracted to another male, then you're homosexual. If you're attracted to the opposite sex then you're heterosexual. If attracted to both then that makes you bisexual. A man who is gay is not transgendered because attraction is not directly proportional to gender. It is how one sees oneself socially that we can define what a gender identity is. One may have a penis but prefer to relate socially as a woman or vice versa. Gender identity refers to one's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. This is where transgenders come into the picture. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual. It cannot be denied that transgenderism is complex. There is no quick shortcut to describe the intricacy of transgenderism in an easy and accurate way. But to easily put it, transgenders expresses gender in a non-traditional manner. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, it is "of, relating to, or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which

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corresponds to the person's sex at birth". In clinical terms, transgenderism is also called gender dysphoria which basically means gender confusion. The currently favoured diagnostic terminology though is gender identity disorder which is the formal diagnosis used by psychologists and physicians to describe persons who experience significant gender dysphoria. 2

Transgenders are also categorized to FTM or MTF. FTM(female to male) are born female yet see themselves as partly to fully masculine while MTF (male to female) are born males but are partly to fully feminine. Generally speaking, transgender refers to anyone who is gender variant which includes transsexuals, transvestites, cross dressers, drag queens and some intersexed individuals. It is an umbrella term for anyone whose internal gender identity differs from their physiology. This would then equate to non conformity of gender expression and behaviour that is typically associated with their sex. For instance, if Alejandro's gender identity is female, his gender expression would be his way to communicate his gender identity. He may act feminine, wear overly-intricate clothing and enhance his boobs to make it more womanly. He is transgender. On the other hand, if Julliana, your typical beauty queen, expresses her gender as what society expects of her, wearing pink, being fashionable and buying girly stuff. Yet she is attracted to Mary. Julliana then is just a homosexual and not a transgender. Lastly, Boyet is attracted to men and felt like he is trapped in the wrong body and that his genital doesn't fully represent who he really is. That makes him both gay and a transgender. When transgenderism is compared to other forms of gender variance, answers may get more confusing. What we should remember is that the term transgenderism includes overlapping categories such as transsexualism, transvestism or androgyny. It is an umbrella term

after all, meaning it shades all other types of gender variance. For example, the distinction of a transsexual to a transgender is that they experience extreme gender dysphoria that they are compelled to undergo medical procedures and/or drug therapies to change their bodies physically to be more like the opposite sex. This usually includes hormone replacement therapy, breast augmentation (or reduction for female-to-male transsexuals), and genital surgeries. It is with that urge to augment one's genitalia that makes the starting point of as transsexualism. They desire to live and be accepted as how they identify themselves. ³ There are lots of misconceptions that are associated with transgenderism. Many consider it as a mental disorder that could be fixed by therapies or even exorcism. One very important determiner of a mental disorder though is that it causes distress or disability. Transgenderism doesn't offer any of these.

Transgenders do not experience their gender as distressing or disabling which implies that transgenderism doesn't constitute as a mental disorder. ²

The type of mental disorder that these transgenders might have is what comes after the ridicule and discrimination that they receive from others who can't accept the fact that not all people could adhere to the conventional gender roles that their culture made. A lack of acceptance within society, direct or indirect experiences with discrimination, or assault and other traumatizing experiences are what lead many transgender people to suffer with anxiety, depression, or related disorders at higher rates than nontransgender persons. They are also often the subject of various hate crimes which are reasons enough to suffer these mental disorders which are not directly associated with their choice. This is the main reason why the LGBT community is driven to conduct a day of remembrance for

transgenders yearly. Not only does it set as a day to remember those who have been victims of anti-transgender violence or celebrate the lives that they lived, but to also raise awareness to the dangers and struggles that gender non-conforming individuals are forced to face every day. ¹ In status quo, more often than not, transgenders continue to hide in their closets in fear for their safety and security. However, they are part of the society and that is a fact that no one can deny. Ultimately, gender is a mode of self-expression, and people within varying cultures like the transgenders are finding new ways to express their identities. While it is a given that it is their right to freely express, it is also a right of the people to have their judgement on how they feel towards them. What is important is that we open our minds and find the time to learn who they really are and not judge them without any basis. At the end of the day, a decision that has evidences and deep understanding as foundations are always the best one. That's a fact!

References ¹ Transgender day of remembrance 2012: 50 transgender icons. (2012, November 20). Retrieved February 26, 2013, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/20/transgender-day-of-remembrance-2012-icons_n_2159754.html#slide=1686323 ² Nangeroni, N. (1996, November). Medical dictionary " gender identity disorder: what to do? ". Gender Talk. Retrieved February 26, 2013, from http://www.gendertalk.com/articles/oped/gid_tnt.shtml ³ Transsexual [Def. 1, 2]. (n. d.). Merriam-Webster Online. In Merriam-Webster. Retrieved February 24, 2013, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transsexual> ⁴ Croft, H. M. D. (2009, January 6). What is a mental illness?. Healthy place. Retrieved February 25, 2013, from www.healthyplace.com/other-info/mental-illness-overview/what-is-a-mental-illness/

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